

BAYOU LA BATRE, ALA.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

TRANSMITTING.

WITH A LETTER FROM THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, REPORT ON PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION OF BAYOU LA BATRE, ALA., WITH A VIEW TO SECURING A CHANNEL CONNECTING BAYOU LA BATRE AND PASS AUX HERONS OF SUITABLE DEPTH AND WIDTH.

JANUARY 10, 1916.—Referred to the Committee on Rivers and Harbors and ordered to be printed.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, January 8, 1916.

The SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith a letter from the Chief of Engineers, United States Army, dated 7th instant, together with copy of a report from Lieut. Col. C. Keller, Corps of Engineers, dated June 25, 1915, on preliminary examination of Bayou La Batre, Ala., made by him in compliance with the provisions of the river and harbor act approved March 4, 1915.

Very respectfully,

LINDLEY M. GARRISON,
Secretary of War.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS,
Washington, January 7, 1916.

From: The Chief of Engineers, United States Army.

To: The Secretary of War.

Subject: Preliminary examination of Bayou La Batre, Ala.

1. There is submitted herewith for transmission to Congress report dated June 25, 1915, by Lieut. Col. C. Keller, Corps of Engineers, on preliminary examination authorized by the river and harbor act approved March 4, 1915, of Bayou La Batre, Ala., with a

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view to securing a channel connecting Bayou La Batre and Pass aux Herons of suitable depth and width.

2. Bayou La Batre is a small stream emptying into Mississippi Sound about 18 miles east of Pascagoula, Miss., and 45 miles southwest of Mobile, Ala. The bayou is narrow and crooked, but small boats can run about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles above the fixed county bridge which crosses the stream about 3 miles above its mouth. The commerce for 1914 is reported at 673 tons. The district officer states that the improvement desired is a channel $6\frac{1}{2}$ feet deep at mean low water from the county bridge to the $6\frac{1}{2}$ -foot contour in Mississippi Sound. The construction of such a channel would involve a large expense, and he believes that the benefits would be purely local and not commensurate with the cost of making and maintaining the desired improvement. The division engineer concurs in this opinion.

3. This report has been referred, as required by law, to the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors, and attention is invited to its report herewith, dated October 12, 1915, concurring in the views of the district officer and the division engineer.

4. After due consideration of the above-mentioned reports, I concur in the views of the district officer, the division engineer, and the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors, and therefore report that the improvement by the United States of Bayou La Batre, Ala., with a view to securing a channel connecting Bayou La Batre and Pass aux Herons of suitable depth and width, is not deemed advisable at the present time.

DAN C. KINGMAN,
Chief of Engineers, United States Army.

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF ENGINEERS FOR RIVERS AND HARBORS.

[Third indorsement.]

BOARD OF ENGINEERS FOR RIVERS AND HARBORS,
October 12, 1915.

To the CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, UNITED STATES ARMY:

1. The following is in review of the district officer's report submitted under authority of the act of March 4, 1915, on preliminary examination of "Bayou La Batre, Ala., with a view to securing a channel connecting Bayou La Batre and Pass aux Herons of suitable depth and width."

2. This is a small stream about 10 miles in length, emptying into Mississippi Sound, about 18 miles east of Pascagoula, Miss. A fixed bridge, about 3 miles above its mouth, limits navigation at that point, except for very small boats, which can go a short distance above. A population of about 2,500 covers a considerable area centering in the vicinity of the bridge. The principal industries are fishing and farming. The commerce is reported as 673 tons, having a value of \$23,363.

3. There is the usual bar at the mouth of the bayou, over which the navigable depth is about 2 feet at mean low water. The depth in the sound increases very gradually, the 6-foot contour being about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from shore. The improvement desired is a channel with a navigable depth of $6\frac{1}{2}$ feet to the county bridge. This would require dredging for a distance of about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles in the bayou and a somewhat greater distance in the sound, where maintenance would

be very expensive. The district officer reports the locality as unworthy of improvement, and in this view the division engineer concurs.

4. Interested parties were informed of the unfavorable report of the district officer and given an opportunity of submitting statements and arguments to the board, but no communications on the subject have been received.

5. The commerce on this bayou is small in quantity, and there is nothing to indicate that it would increase materially as a result of the improvement desired. It seems clear that the first cost and the subsequent maintenance of a channel in this exposed locality would be excessive when compared with probable benefits. The board therefore concurs with the district officer and the division engineer in the opinion that it is not advisable for the United States to undertake the improvement of Bayou La Batre at the present time.

6. In compliance with law, the board reports that there are no questions of terminal facilities, water power, or other related subjects which could be coordinated with the suggested improvement in such manner as to render the work advisable in the interests of commerce and navigation.

For the board:

FREDERIC V. ABBOT,
Colonel, Corps of Engineers,
Senior Member Present.

PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION OF BAYOU LA BATRE, ALA.

UNITED STATES ENGINEER OFFICE,
Mobile, Ala., June 25, 1915.

From: The District Engineer Officer.

To: The Chief of Engineers, United States Army
(Through the Division Engineer).

Subject: Preliminary examination, Bayou La Batre, Ala.

1. Complying with instructions contained in department letter of March 15, 1915, there is submitted below a report of a preliminary examination of Bayou La Batre, Ala.

2. *Geographical location and physical characteristics.*—Bayou La Batre is a small stream about 10 miles long in the southern part of Mobile County. It is about 8 miles east of the boundary line between the States of Mississippi and Alabama, and empties into Mississippi Sound about 18 miles east of Pascagoula, Miss., and 45 miles southwest of Mobile, Ala. It has a drainage area of perhaps 30 square miles. There is a fixed county bridge across this stream about 3 miles above its mouth. Though the bayou is very narrow and crooked along the upper half of this distance, small boats can run about 1½ miles above this bridge.

This bayou varies in width from 500 feet at its mouth to about 125 feet at a point 3 miles above, while 4½ miles above its mouth the width is only about 30 feet.

United States Coast and Geodetic Survey Coast Chart No. 189 shows the conditions off shore and the connection between this bayou and Pass Aux Herons, Ala. The small map¹ accompanying shows the locality and its relation to Mobile and Pascagoula.

¹ Not printed.

3. *Present condition.*—Soundings show that the distance from the 7-foot to the 6-foot contour in Mississippi Sound is about 2,000 feet; the distance from the 6-foot to the 5-foot contour is about 4,000 feet; the distance from the 5-foot to the 4-foot contour is about 1,000 feet; and from the latter to the 2-foot contour the distance is only about 600 feet. The depth then varies between 2 and 3 feet for a distance of about one-half a mile. From this point there is a less depth than 6 feet for a distance of about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles. From the latter point very little work would be required to obtain the desired depth of 6 feet. However, there is a distance of more than 3 miles over which dredging would have to be conducted in order to obtain a depth of 6 feet.

4. *Previous examinations.*—A report of an examination of this bayou was submitted by this office November 13, 1909. This report is contained in House Document No. 316, Sixty-first Congress, second session. In this report, the locality was considered unworthy of improvement.

5. *Resources, industries, and commerce.*—The town of Bayou La Batre is situated on the east bank of the bayou and extends practically from its mouth to the county bridge. The inhabitants number about 2,500. These, as well as a considerable number living in the country adjacent to this stream, are interested in the desired improvement. The people live principally by fishing and farming. There are some small ship-yards and fish houses along the banks of this stream. Fish and oysters are taken in Mississippi Sound and carried in light-draft vessels to Bayou La Batre for shipment by rail. The Mobile & Ohio Railroad Co. (Bay Shore Division), has a station within a few hundred feet of the stream near where the county bridge crosses it, and the Louisville & Nashville Railroad is within 7 miles of this locality.

Commercial statistics for the calendar year 1914 were furnished through the courtesy of Mr. Frank E. Smee, a landowner and merchant in Bayou La Batre. They are as follows:

Articles.	Amount in short tons.	Valuation.
Oil, refined.....	288	\$10,000
Fish and oysters.....	295	8,514
Merchandise.....	70	4,620
Lumber and shingles.....	20	229
Total.....	673	23,363

Following is a list of vessels engaged in business at Bayou La Batre:

Schooners.

Name.	Length.	Beam.	Draft, loaded.	Registered tonnage.	Owner.
	<i>Feet.</i>	<i>Feet.</i>	<i>Feet.</i>		
August Kling, sr.....	50	16	3.5	10	F. E. Smee.
Verona.....	50	16	5.0	8	F. E. Smee and Bryant.
Clara La Coste.....	46	15	3.9	12	F. E. Smee.
Francis Cox.....	44	15	4.0	11	Do.
Carrie A.....	41	14	3.4	8	Do.
Gertie Rhodes.....					E. W. Rabby.
Emma.....					Bosarge Bros.
Amethyst.....					C. E. Graham.

SLOOPS.

Juno, Bryant Bros.
Mary Walker, F. E. Smee.
Rubby, F. E. Smee.
Leo, F. E. Smee.
Maud, S. Previto.
Hattie, R. Barber.

POWER BOATS.

Birmingham, John Crenshaw.
Fred S., F. E. Smee.
Amy S., F. E. Smee.
Titanic, F. E. Smee.
Helen D., F. E. Smee.
Ruth, S. C. Crenshaw.
Rounder, Earl Bryant.

BARGES AND MISCELLANEOUS.

Lela (cruiser), J. F. Cahoun.
Wathimo (cabin cruiser), A. E. Woodworth.
Ada (cabin cruiser), George A. Collin.
Eric, Tom Robinson.
Irme, Hubert Bosarge.
Rascal, W. B. Gerlot.
St. Louis, Albert Emerson.
Select, A. D. Gerlot.
Elizabeth, J. B. Powell.
Naomi, E. N. Shepperd.
Paul Jones, Albert Lamy.
Adlay, Mastin Bosarge.

6. *Nature of improvement desired.*—A channel having a depth of 6½ feet at mean low water over a navigable width, from the county bridge, which is about the center of the business section of the town, to the 6½-foot contour in Mississippi Sound is generally desired. Such a channel would, it is claimed, obviate the necessity to which the larger number of vessels that use Bayou La Batre are now subjected of, waiting for high tide before crossing the bar at the mouth of the bayou, the effect of the present extremely limited depth of the channel being not only to decrease the volume of business done by the vessels now in service but also to discourage others from entering into business. With the deeper channel it is believed that the present commerce would at least be doubled and that new commodities, such as a considerable amount of charcoal, lumber, cross-ties, and naval stores, would be shipped. It is further believed, locally, that the use of larger vessels capable of proceeding to distant points would result in some diminution of freight rates and that as a result of the existence of these larger vessels industries such as canning factories would be established. It is further believed that, should increased business result in the development of industries above the county bridge, no difficulty would be experienced in inducing the county authorities to provide the bridge with an opening suitable for navigation.

7. *Reclaimed lands and water-power development.*—Only the low, marshy land bordering the bayou upon which dredged material might be deposited could be reclaimed. The stream is affected by the tide, and no water power interests would be affected by the proposed improvement.

8. *Terminal and transfer facilities.*—Such facilities as exist are in the nature of somewhat primitive wharves on the banks of the

stream. These are unprovided with any direct connection with the railroad, and have no mechanical appliances of any kind. They are, however, sufficient for the business at present transacted.

9. *Conclusions.*—The country in the vicinity of Bayou La Batre is traversed by two railroads, which probably furnish all necessary facilities for the transportation of agricultural products and other perishable freight to Mobile and more northern markets. A channel having a depth of 17 feet has been formed by the General Government at Pascagoula, Miss., only 18 miles distant. While the fish and oyster business might increase to some extent at Bayou La Batre as a result of the improvement, this business can readily be handled at the port of Pascagoula. The deepening of the channel might cause an increase in the charcoal, lumber, and naval stores business, but even judging by the statements of interested parties this would be comparatively small. The information gained in this examination confirms that obtained and reported previously. Benefits that might accrue would be purely local, and would not be commensurate with the cost of the formation and maintenance of a channel at this locality. It is therefore recommended that no work be undertaken here, and that no funds be expended in making a survey.

10. In compliance with existing orders, those who are locally interested in this improvement have been informed concerning the character of this report, and concerning the further steps available to them.

C. KELLER,
Lieut. Col., Corps of Engineers.

[First indorsement.]

OFFICE OF DIVISION ENGINEER, GULF DIVISION,
New Orleans, La., September 18, 1915.

To the CHIEF OF ENGINEERS:

1. Forwarded, concurring in the views and recommendations of the district officer.

2. On my recent visit to Bayou La Batre it was noticed that there were two summer resorts a short distance to the eastward of the bayou, facing Mississippi Sound, the stations on the Mobile & Ohio Railroad for these resorts being, respectively, Coden and Sans Souci Beach. These stations are distant, respectively, 2.6 and 1.1 miles from the Bayou La Batre station, and the proposed entrance channel would give access to neither.

3. The following information regarding the population of these two places and Bayou La Batre is taken from the report of the United States Census, 1910:

	1900 census.	1910 census.
Bayou La Batre, Precinct No. 18.....	551	719
Coden, Precinct No. 25.....	332	255

Sans Souci is not mentioned. It therefore appears that as the place has no well-defined limits, the population stated in the within report, 2,500, which is the same as that given in the preliminary ex-

amination report of November 13, 1909, probably includes that of these shore resorts and a considerable part of the surrounding country that would not be directly benefited by the proposed improvement.

4. It has been learned that the canning factory formerly on the bayou was destroyed by the hurricane of 1906 and has not been rebuilt. The remaining factory, if it should resume operations, is located so far to the eastward of the proposed channel that it could not be reached by any boats whose draft would require the excavation of the proposed channel. It appears also that a number of the boats reported as plying to Bayou La Batre visit the oyster boats or the fishing grounds in Mississippi Sound, and after obtaining a load proceed directly to Biloxi or Pascagoula, their established markets. Bayou La Batre serves as a place to lay up, repair gear, etc.

5. It is evident that the construction of such a channel as desired, and particularly its maintenance, would involve a large expense, and this, in my opinion, would not be justified by the present and prospective commerce interested.

J. C. SANFORD,
Colonel, Corps of Engineers,
Division Engineer.

[For report of the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors, see p. 2.]





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